

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Frank J Bia MD and I am from Guilford, CT. I am also an emeritus professor of medicine at Yale University.

I am in support of SB284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status will be a critical step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve as citizens of this state. But this is only a beginning which should lead to expanding access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

I have worked extensively with our immigrant population in New Haven, particularly when I was part of the medical staff at the Fair Haven Community Health Center. I also still volunteer in the Haven Free Clinic at Yale, where I see many completely uninsured immigrant patients and I have come to understand the real importance of HUSKY in this state. It needs to be expanded to include an even more vulnerable population of patients. Husky was expanded last year to include children ages 0 – 8 years and SB284 will ensure further coverage by expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18.

This should be part of an even wider effort to ensure that all immigrants have access to HUSKY. This will require further long-term planning. If we are to tackle problems like COVID-19 we cannot only focus on a segment of the immigrant community. We must include those who are undocumented, both adults and children. One cannot have a true public health effort in the community at large when an important segment of the population is unable to adequately avail themselves of health care due to lack of insurance. Further expansion of HUSKY is necessary and this is an important place to start.

I strongly support S.B. 284 and I ask the committee to support and pass this legislation. Looking forward, I ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age.

Thank you for your interest and efforts,

Frank J Bia MD MPH